



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*** GUEST EDITORIAL ***

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Education is vital to workforce and economic development

By State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

We must invest in our PK-12 educational system or Wisconsin will lose its competitive edge.

The knowledge-based economy is here. Those who know how to think, create, and innovate will have the advantage in developing the high value goods and services that propel economic development. Our schools teach those skills through the broad spectrum of a balanced curriculum. From mathematics and reading to social studies and world languages, from music and the arts to science and technology, our schools must provide our students with the rigorous and relevant coursework that will prepare them for the future.

I recently introduced an education budget proposal for the 2009-2011 biennium that calls for significant reinvestment in our PK-12 educational system. My education budget would increase global literacy and competitiveness, increase student achievement, support rural school districts and special education programs, provide for library services, enhance teacher quality, and address school finance and revenue limits.

My education budget calls for specific investment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, which are powerful assets to workforce and economic development. The future awaits those with the training to create new solutions to the world's urgent problems. I want to expand the STEM grant program so more schools can offer truly innovative and engaging courses that promote a spirit of discovery and lead to careers in the 21st century workforce. My budget calls for a STEM Stewardship Fund that would support remodeling of Wisconsin middle and high school classrooms and laboratories to support that STEM coursework. Additionally, my budget supports STEM

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academies that would develop curricular models and unit plans, provide staff development, and offer STEM courses and experiences for high school students. STEM education is vital to workforce development and economic prosperity.

We all know times are tight, and the 2009-2011 biennial budget will be no exception. While we won't be able to do everything I've proposed for education, we can begin the reinvestment that our schools and communities need to keep our families, our children, and our state competitive in the 21st century. By working together, we can make sure that education remains Wisconsin's top priority.

We can afford no less for our children. Those who drop out are more likely to be underemployed, incarcerated, or dependent on social programs. All of us, whether we have children in school or not, have a stake in education. From our largest district in Milwaukee to one of the smallest on Washington Island and every district in between, the future is in our schools today. Our students will become the teachers, engineers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. We must invest in their education so they create the world we want in the future.

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Elizabeth Burmaster is the elected state superintendent of public instruction.

NOTES: A high-resolution photo of the state superintendent is available on the Department of Public Instruction "Media Contacts and Resources" webpage at <http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/vm-media.html>. This editorial is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_145.pdf.